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ABSTRACT

A description is given of an evaluation method which may be used as a tool in the comprehensive evaluation of preservice teacher education field experience programs. The "Parallel Pairs" construct is a theoretical model, empty of content, which can be used for a variety of purposes. This blank format, to be filled with field experience or practica data as content, is composed of vertical and horizontal axes. On the vertical axis the traditional planning components (i.e., goals, objectives/activities, resource/materials, and evaluation) are depicted as categories placed in a hierarchical, inclusive sequence. Double syntax lines are used to demarcate level changes. The final category, evaluation, permits terminal examination of the other categories taken as a whole. Here, evaluative judgements concerning adequate completion of the desired ends or purpose are made. The horizontal axis is comprised of the variables to which the planning categories apply--courses, or practica representing a hypothetical professional education sequence. The applicability of this model is demonstrated when the categories on the vertical axis and the variables on the horizontal axis are in place. The result is a two-phase comprehensive evaluation of the specific course practicum and the entire field experience program. (JD)

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Abstract

Field experiences are beneficial in teacher preparation but the development and coordination of course practica must be made deliberate to insure achievement of program goals. The adequacy of any practicum or overall field experience program is only as good as the models used to examine, analyze and evaluate this essential component of teacher preparation.

Field Experience Evaluation:
A Paradigm for Pre-service Practica

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> . . . There is the same sort of advantage in having conceptual frameworks manufactured and on hand in advance of actual occasions for their use, as there is in having tools ready instead of improvising them when the need arises (Dewey, 1938, p. 138).

Education in the United States has received a tremendous amount of attention in the last three years. One need merely mention "A Nation At Risk," "High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America," or a variety of other articles to be reminded of this focus. The concern with education is not limited specifically to elementary or secondary schools. Each report seems to have direct or indirect impact on teacher education.

The implications for teacher education are numerous, far reaching, and extensive. Recommendations range from "a comprehensive partnership with one or more secondary school" (A Nation at Risk, 1983, p. 11) to the creation of "A five year program with the fifth year concentrated on professional education and field experience" (Weaver, 1984, p. 119). Although these recommendations have elicited varied responses related to the restructuring of teacher education programs, little has been done, beyond the immediate or descriptive level, in dealing with pre-service teacher education field experience.

In "An Emerging Early Field Experience Program," J. A. Williamson (1979) has done much to describe the roles of students, cooperating teachers, university instructors, and field experience administrators. Other reports, such as "Role of the University in Field Based Pre-service Teacher Education" by Hans Anderson (1976), and Kepner and Nelson's "Creating Conditions for Professional Practice in Education" (1981) also outline the roles of those involved or steps taken to enhance practica implementation.

While participant responsibility and procedural matters are indeed important, other concerns are also essential for an effective field experience program. In "Professional Laboratory Experiences: Excellence or Mediocrity?," I. V. Ahnell (1985) insightfully presents a distinction between teacher training and teacher education. While calling for a Dewey-like medical model for teacher education, Ahnell proposes criteria and purposes for a generic field experience model. Shirley Heck in "An Integrated Pre-Service/In-Service School-Based Teacher Education Model," (1977) as the title implies, also presents a detailed field experience model with formal consideration given the integration and sequence of practica.

Careful consideration is required to insure that the implementation of field experiences for pre-service teachers becomes more than a "Band-Aid" approach. It is quite evident that the authors of the reports and articles cited, as well as many others included in the literature, have aided a great deal in the understanding of field experiences. Based on a review of the literature, however, it appears that the evaluation of the overall field experience program is the weakest component.

A variety of practica evaluation schemes have been presented, but the focus is primarily on student self-evaluation of individual courses, student journals, or checklists to be completed by students or cooperating teachers. Field experience evaluation at the participation level is not enough. Attention must be afforded the structures inherent in student field experience criteria. This attention requires that the organization and evaluation of the overall program become deliberate.

Insuring comprehensive evaluation and accountability within individual school site assignments, as well as among two or more practica, necessitates the use of a theoretical format to orchestrate an entire field experience program. The format or construct discussed in this article as a vehicle in field experience evaluation is the "Parallel Pairs" model as developed by Engle, Saunders, and Blake (1976).

The purpose of this article is not to re-invent the model but, rather, to demonstrate the applicability of one theoretical construct, specifically the "Parallel Pairs" model, as a tool in the comprehensive evaluation of pre-service teacher education field experience programs.

Briefly, the "Parallel Pairs" construct is a theoretical model, empty of content, which can be used for a variety of purposes. This blank format, to be filled with field experience or practica data as content, is composed of vertical and horizontal axes (Figure 1).

On the vertical axis (Figure 2) the traditional planning components (i.e., GOALS, OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES, RESOURCE/MATERIALS, and EVALUATION) are depicted as categories placed in a hierarchical, inclusive sequence. Double syntax lines are used to demarcate level changes. "Evaluation" of a given practicum, for example, is not the same level as the components to be evaluated. The definitions of these planning categories are as follows:

> PURPOSES (represent) the desired ends for specific activities. GOALS are operational definitions of a purpose. OBJECTIVES are derived from this language of the goals and are specifications given the major concepts of a goal. Objectives are capable of measurement to determine phases of completion. Objectives provide the evaluation criteria for identifying and measuring completion of the activity. ACTIVITIES are the specific tasks required to accomplish an objective from which they are derived and are in sequence to cumulatively constitute the objective. RESOURCES are those conditions or MATERIALS that must accompany the activities in order to complete or achieve them. (Engle, et al., 1981, p. 23-26).

The final category, EVALUATION, permits terminal examination of the other categories taken as a whole. Here, evaluative judgments concerning adequate completion of the desired ends, or purposes, are made.

The horizontal axis is comprised of the variables (Figure 3) to which the planning categories apply. In this instance the first variable consists of the systemic requirements of the practicum associated with a hypothetical "Introduction to Education" course.

As is readily seen, there is really nothing unique to this planning sequence except perhaps increased clarity with the inclusion of double syntax lines. The beauty of this model is increasingly evident, however, when additional parallel variables are added on the horizontal axis (Figure 4).

As illustrated in Figure 4, other hypothetical variables, separated by single vertical syntax lines, that is, "Secondary/Middle School Curriculum Practicum," and "Secondary/Middle School Methods Practicum," have been added. As mentioned earlier, double syntax lines were used to demarcate level changes. Here, single, vertical lines demonstrate a "lateral relational significance as in 'more of' or 'less of', 'before' or 'after', 'basic to' or 'in depth cases of', etc., (and). . . must bear a fixed relationship to horizontal axes" (Decker & Saunders, 1976, p. 144).

These courses, or variables, separated by the vertical lines, are parallel and thus represent a hypothetical professional education sequence. As such, these courses are taken by all students desiring a teaching certificate.

The applicability of this model is demonstrated when the categories on the vertical axis and the variables on the horizontal axis are in place. The result is a two-phase comprehensive

evaluation of the specific course practicum and also the entire field experience program.

The initial phase of the evaluation occurs when the variables on the horizontal axis are examined separately in relation to the categories on the vertical axis (i.e., "Introduction to Education" in the context of Goals, Objectives, etc.). The examination and analysis here would lay clear the adequacy of the criteria for the specific practicum under scrutiny, Figure 4, (A).

The second phase of evaluation takes place when the categorical components of each variable are examined and analyzed in relation to the remaining variables, Figure 4, (B). This examination (i.e., Purpose/Goals in the contexts of "Introduction to Education," "Secondary/Middle Grades Curriculum," etc.) would result in the evaluation of the entire field experience program. Evaluation here would pinpoint repetition, omissions, inconsistencies, and present an overall depiction of program Purpose/Goals, Objectives/Activities, and Resource/Materials.

The purpose of this article is not to suggest or establish guidelines for field experience programs but rather is much more fundamental. The concern here has been with the development and demonstration of a paradigm which makes the process of field experience and practica evaluation deliberate. As field experience requirements are added and strengthened in teacher education, it is essential that their evaluation be systematic and comprehensive. After all, the usefulness of any field experience program or

individual course practicum is only as adequate as the tools or formats used to assess its effectiveness. The "Parallel Pairs" construct, outlined above, is just one format that forces the systematic, comprehensive evaluation of this increasingly important component of teacher education-significant-on-the-job experience.

Figure 1. Model axes, i.e., categories (vertical) and Variables (horizontal).

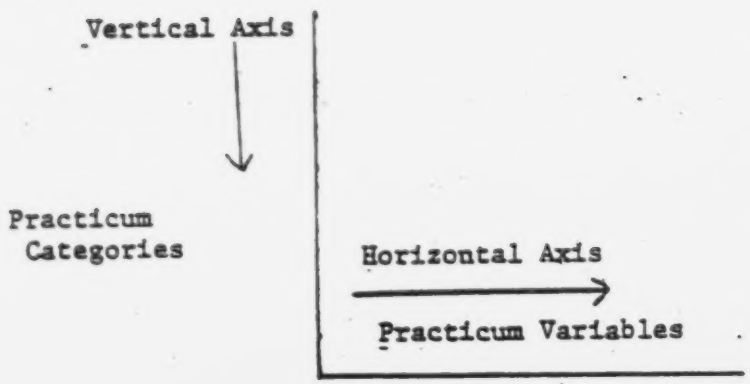

Figure 2. Traditional hierarchical planning sequence in theoretical format.

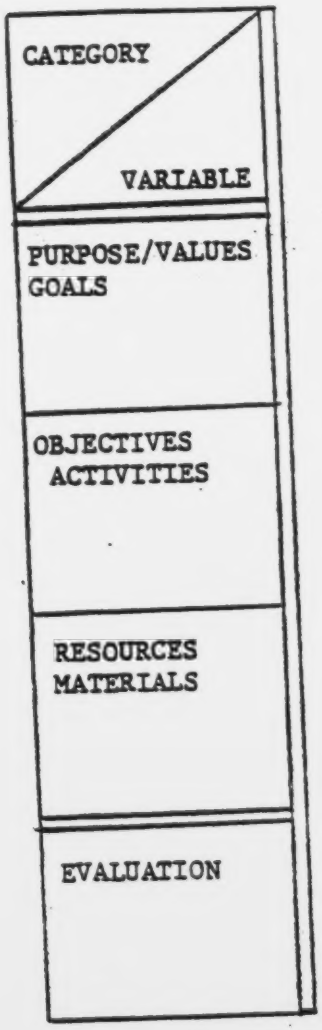

Figure 3. Planning categories with course practicum as variable.

CATEGORY ↓ / VARIABLE →	INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION PRACTICUM
PURPOSE/VALUES GOALS	
OBJECTIVES ACTIVITIES	
RESOURCES MATERIALS	
EVALUATION	

Figure 4. Comprehensive field experience evaluation format.

CATEGORY	INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION PRACTICUM	SECONDARY/ MIDDLE GRADES CURRICULUM PRACTICUM	SECONDARY/ MIDDLE GRADES METHODS PRACTICUM	EVALUATION
PURPOSE GOALS				Categorical
OBJECTIVES ACTIVITIES				(B) Program
RESOURCES MATERIALS				Evaluation
EVALUATION	Specific	Practicum (A)	Evaluation	

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